REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are pending in the current application. Applicants have amended independent claim 1. Support for the amendment is found, for example, from Page 9, Paragraph 4 to Page 12, Paragraph 2 of the specification. No new matter has been introduced by way of this amendment.

Initially, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 11-20 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in an independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. However, since Applicants believe that the current amendment made to claim 1 would render all the claims allowable over the cited prior art, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider the present application in light of the present submission.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-2 and 4-10 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as allegedly anticipated by U. S. Patent No. 6,747,465 to Esashi et al. (hereafter "Esashi"). Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection is overcome in light of the amendment made to independent claim 1 and the remarks made herein.

To maintain a claim rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102, a reference must disclose each and every element of the claim, either expressly or inherently. Esashi fails to do so.

Applicants' independent claim 1, as amended, recites an inspection probe for inspecting electrical properties of a semiconductor device. The probe includes, *inter alia*, a base member, wiring layers mounted on the base member, probe pins electrically connected to the wiring layers and protruding from the base member, first metal layers provided to the tips of the probe pins, and second metal layers formed on the wiring layers. Significantly, the second metal layers are made of a material different from that of the probe pins, and the first metal layers and the second metal layers are physically separated from each other by the probe pins. With this configuration, the inspection probe as recited by claim 1 offers good contact properties and high durability.

Turning to the prior art, Esashi discloses a probe card (20) including a contactor board (11), a plurality of conductive member (12), and a plurality of cantilever type probes (15). Each probe includes a beam member (13) and a contact bump (14) provided on the tip (13E) of the beam member. The beam member (13) has a two-layer structure comprised of a silicon layer (13A) and a conductive layer (13F). Specifically, as illustrated in Figure 1 of Esashi, the beam member (13) is further divided into a base end (13B), a step-shaped portion (13C), a coupling portion (13D), and the above-mentioned tip (13E), all of which are formed of a same material.

In the Office Action, the Examiner construes the contact bump (14) as disclosure of the first metal layers recited by claim 1, the beam member (13) as disclosure of the probe pins recited by claim 1, and the step-shaped portion (13C) of the beam member as disclosure of the second metal layers recited by claim 1, based on which the Examiner alleges that Esashi discloses that the first metal layers and the second metal layers are separated from each other.

However, as described by Esashi, the step-shaped portion (13C) is made of a same material as the beam member (13). Thus, Esashi does not disclose "the second metal layers are made of a material different from that of the probe pins", as recited by claim 1.

Furthermore, even assuming, *arguendo*, the Examiner's above construction of the contact bump (14), the beam member (13) and the step-shaped portion (13C) is proper, Esashi does not disclose that the contact bump (14) and the step-shaped portion (13C) are physically separated from each other by the beam member (13), since the beam member (13) including the step-shaped portion (13C) is not physically separated from the contact bump (14). In other words, the beam member (13), including the step portion (13C), and the contact bump (14) are directly electrically connected with each other.

In start contrast, claim 1 recites that the second metal layers are made of a material different from that of the probe pins, and the first metal layers and the second metal layers are physically

separated from each other by the probe pins.

Thus, Esashi fails to disclose each and every element of claim 1, from which all the other claims depend ultimately. Accordingly, the rejection of claims 1-2 and 4-10 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) based on Esashi is overcome and withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

The Examiner has rejected claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Esashi. Applicants respectfully submit the rejection is overcome in light of amendment made to claim 1 and the following remarks.

Claim 1, from which claim 3 depend, is discussed above. Esashi is discussed above relative to claim 1. Since Esashi fails to disclose each and every element of claim 1, Esashi does not teach or suggest the combination of features of claim 3 depending from claim 1. Thus, the rejection of claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on Esashi is overcome and withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is firmly believed that the subject application is in condition for allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

If the Examiner should have any questions concerning this communication or feels that an interview would be helpful, the Examiner is invited to call Applicants' undersigned attorney at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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